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Description & Highlights

Introduction to NESSThai and its first newsletter
An update on NESSThai's status since its incorporation in March 1999
Habitats, Natural Value, Cultural/Nature Interpretation, Small Worlds...
A newly-formed local venture starting with the right intentions...

NESSThai Newsletter

NESSThai Newsletter
Volume 1 • Issue 1
August 1999

Network for Environmentally- & Socially-Sustainable Tourism

Welcome!

Welcome to this, our first Newsletter. It is our hope that we will be able to send you a newsletter every two months, but bear with us if things start a little slowly. There are only two of us working in NESSThai and it sometimes takes us a little time to get everything together.

NESSThai's goal is to work towards the integration of the tourism industry into a more sustainable development of Thailand. Our initial focus is the Southern region, where we are based. If you would like to learn more about how NESSThai operates please visit our web site: <http://www.geocities.com/~nesst>.

Through this newsletter, we hope to keep you up to date with some of the activities we have been undertaking, and look forward to receiving your correspondence if you have comments or articles you would like to contribute relating to tourism, the environment and sustainable development.

As NESSThai is currently entirely funded out of the savings of the founders, Sophia & Natapon Buranakul, we are limited in what we can achieve. We have therefore decided to focus on the Habitats 1 programme (an environmental education programme), the Natural Value programme (a research programme), the Small Worlds programme (an international relations

programme with some research aspects) and the Nature Interpretation and Across Cultures programmes (extension programmes). The aims of each of these programmes are described in more detail on our web site.

In our first issue we have a description of our first project activities under the Habitats Programme and updates for the Natural Value, Small Worlds, Nature Interpretation and Across Cultures Programmes.

As we are based in the beautiful and newly-developing tourism centre of Krabi, we will also try to provide you with some local points of interest about Krabi and nearby provinces. In this issue we describe a tour taken with a small local company with whom we hope to work to develop nature interpretation and cultural interpretation materials.

Current local news of interest concerns moves to protect the landmark "James Bond Island" or "Khao Tapoo" limestone outcrop.

We hope you enjoy our newsletter!

Natapon & Sophia Buranakul

P.S. We have included explanatory footnotes for those who may not be all that familiar with Thailand.

NESSThai Update

Things have been a bit slow getting started since NESSThai was registered as a not-for-profit corporation in the State of Illinois in March. For one thing moving house to the South of Thailand took some organisation, and while we have been settled in our new home since March 1st, a more momentous event in our lives slowed us up some more when we found out that Sophia was pregnant with our first child.

As we are still entirely self-funded we are also compelled to take freelance consulting work when available, so we are effectively only working at NESSThai part-time. Excuses aside, we've been busy getting to know our new home, exploring the minor roads of Krabi, visiting tourism centres, and making friends with local groups and individuals with similar interests. We have also had the chance to establish some contacts with national organisations involved in research or extension of environmental studies of various sorts. We hope that some of these will lead to collaborations on future research projects, and NESSThai's involvement in educational programmes. And we have made a start

on some of our eight planned programmes.

Programme Update

Habitats Programme

On the 8th July, we started our first project in the Habitats programme. The aim of the first phase in the Habitats programme is to develop knowledge and a conscious appreciation of school students' home environments through the development of maps, and the study of students' interactions with their environment.



We were very fortunate to have the co-operation of Acharn Duangkhae Suwan, a teacher at the Chian Yai Secondary School, Nakhon Sri Thammarat in implementing this project. "P'Noi"¹, as we call her, brought together students from classes Matthayom 1 through to Matthayom 5 (13 to 17 years' old) for a day session at the school where we introduced the idea of using maps to describe our home. Selection of the students was left up to the teacher. P'Noi chose students based on where they lived - focusing on students who lived out of the main towns. She was a very willing and

¹ "P" is a term of respect meaning elder, used commonly in Thailand. "Noi" is Acharn Duangkhae's nickname. Most people in Thailand have a formal given name and a nickname. Often the nickname may appear somewhat unattractive, e.g. chicken or pig. Noi means little or small. It is traditional to use some title with the nickname or given name, thus we address P'Noi as our elder, or when talking to her students as "Acharn Duangkhae".

enthusiastic guinea pig for this project, leading the class, offering many suggestions, and helping us understand how this project fits within the Thai national curriculum (a bonus when promoting the project with other schools).

Getting Started



The day's activities began with the students writing down all their feelings, good and bad, as they relate to their idea of "home" or "barn" (the word for home in Thai). There were some quite diverse responses, although as might be expected, most centred on the idea that "home" is a safe and comfortable place, a starting point for one's development, and a haven to return to after journeys away.

Subsequently, we moved to the students' broader world, and asked them to list all the activities they carry out in a regular week, i.e. sleeping, getting up, washing, eating breakfast, carrying out chores, travelling to school, studying, going to the temple, and so forth. The students were asked to list where they carried out these different activities. P'Noi was insistent that the students be very precise about where they carried out their daily activities, washing their clothes, or bathing, for example. Many of the students in the class do not have bathrooms at their houses and use local water sources, such as small canals and pools for these activities. We also asked the students to write down how they feel about carrying out these different activities.

Once the students had completed their list, together with the location and emotions associated with the activities, it was explained that, through writing, the students had begun to describe their world. They had begun with their current centre, their home, and extended out to their immediate world which includes the market, school, temple and so forth. At that time, we were not studying the broader world of their province, places they visit rarely on festivals, or the homes of their relatives, but rather we were focusing on their immediate and most familiar environment. Having used words to describe their environment, we were then moving on to more visual representations.

The students were then asked to prepare maps which showed all the places they visited during the course of carrying out their weekly activities. The



maps also had to show the activities they carried out at these different places. P'Noi's insistence on detail in describing the location of the students' daily activities, such as washing, paid off in the level of detail of the maps produced by the children.

We then took a well-earned break for lunch!

Group Maps

After lunch we brought the students back together and asked them to form small groups (about 7 to each group). In these groups, students were asked to develop a "community" map showing the homes and locations of each student's weekly activities. Because all the students attend the same school, the

school was shown to be the "centre" of this community, with the different worlds of each student overlapping around this centre. We also asked the students to represent the emotions they feel about different places in their world using symbols. These symbols were to be used, together with a legend, on the group maps.

The students had a lot of fun developing symbols for emotions with some interesting results. One group gave a clear demonstration of "biophobia" as described by Edward O. Wilson¹, using a picture of a snake to indicate fear! A balloon was a symbol for the feeling of boredom - a sense of just hanging there with nothing to occupy oneself. Other groups used simple pictures of faces showing the effect of the different emotions on these faces - hair standing on end for fear, a happy smile for fun and so forth.



Putting the individual maps together into a group map was somewhat less successful. Very few of the students had much of an idea of the different directions in relation to their home and school. So, for example, they could not say whether they lived to the North of the school or to the South, nor could they relate where their homes were in relation to the homes of the other group members (unless they were very close together of course). They were also unsure of principles of scale when trying

¹ The concept of biophobia is described in some detail by Roger S. Ulrich in his chapter "Biophilia, Biophobia and Natural Landscapes" in the book "The Biophilia Hypothesis" edited by Stephen R. Kellert and Edward O. Wilson 1993.

to integrate several individual maps together. Although interestingly, several had incorporated scales into their individual maps, they could not do so for the group maps. Also, many groups left several features of the individual maps out of the group maps. This tendency to leave things out seemed to stem from the fact that there was limited space available on some maps, problems with scale, and a desire to keep the group maps "clean" and aesthetically appealing. (Laziness when confronting a problem of where to put this or that place was confessed to be another contributing factor too!)

Nonetheless, P'Noi, Eddy and I persevered, and made the students redo their maps until all features of all individual maps were included. We also followed up to understand more about why some emotions were felt in certain places: "Q. You have a snake here, what are you afraid of? A. Snakes!" or "Q. What are you afraid of at the temple? A. Ghosts, Q. So have you ever seen a ghost? A. Never, we're afraid just in case."

The maps at the end were rather cluttered as the students tried to incorporate all their activities, emotions and all the places they visited during a regular week, but they did provide a strong starting point for further activities on their home environment, and a useful focus for discussion. For what were effectively first drafts, they showed that students were beginning to think in terms of places, space and their interactions with and feelings about



different places at different times.

The Next Step

Right at the end of the day, we started the students on some out-of-school activities to be undertaken over the course of the next month. Students were asked to choose an animal. No stipulations were given about the animal except that it had to be one they were familiar with in their own home environment (i.e. no tigers unless there were tigers near their home). Some students showed a clear affinity and interest with particular animals picking a cat, dog or butterfly without a moment's hesitation. Others needed to think rather more carefully about the animal they wanted to choose. We also had to limit the number of pets chosen to introduce some variety in the types of animals being chosen. There's always one in the class, and so we weren't too surprised when one boy chose the cockroach. He was rather more surprised, and somewhat dismayed, when we accepted his choice.

To begin with, we gave the students activities which depended very much on study and observation. The students were asked to carry out some independent study to prepare a list of activities for the animal they had chosen over one year, and they were asked to specify whether these activities would be carried out during the day or at night. They were told they could use any sources of information they could find, whether that be library books, school texts, or information and advice from knowledgeable people in their community and so on. They were also asked to keep a diary for the animal including: when and where they saw the animal, what it was doing, how it was moving, and any interesting characteristics. Finally, they were asked to try to imagine how the animal would be feeling as it carried out its different

activities and at different times that the students observed them. This particular request appeared to cause some concern for the boy who had chosen a cockroach. Imagining how a cockroach might feel didn't seem terribly easy, and of course now he was actually going to have to stop his parents and friends from killing his object of study. P'Noi's further elaboration about how to observe and imagine (or project) feelings from the way the cockroach might be moving, where it was heading and so forth, seemed to give him some encouragement.

To encourage the students to use their imagination and creative skills, students were also asked to draw pictures or cartoons if they could, and to write a story, play or poem about the animal (P'Noi is a literature teacher and this was one of her suggestions).

P'Noi agreed to continue with this project work, revising maps and following up with the students on their out-of-school work, and we also committed to visiting the Chian Yai Secondary School to start the next phase (drawing maps for the animals) some time in the near future.

[Comments on the Project](#)

Because this was intended to be a test of the Habitats project, and also to give the children as much freedom as possible in the way they developed their ideas on maps, no general principles of mapping were introduced to the children before they began this session. The results showed that while some students had some idea of what a map should look like, some incorporating scales and using symbolic and 2-dimensional representations of bridges and other features, most had little idea of scale, and tended to draw their homes and other objects in 3-dimensions, with little recourse to symbols and legends. Few students were sure of the directions as

applied to their homes in relation to the school and other features. This was not wholly dependent on age. According to P'Noi, maps are only used rarely in classes in Thailand, and children are not very familiar with drawing or using maps of their homes.

We remain somewhat concerned about introducing standard maps into the classroom at an early stage in the project. The concern is that students might be tempted to copy standard symbols for houses, temples, forests etc., instead of developing their own pictorial representations. We also prefer to give the children plenty of leeway to express themselves as they feel comfortable in the initial stages of mapmaking. At the same time, it is evident that we will need to explain to other participating schools that the children's first attempts at making maps are unlikely to be perfect cartographic representations, nor need they be. We can also see the merit of introducing standard maps and explaining conventions to the students later on in the projects, once they have already established their own preferred representations of their environments.

In general, the students seemed to enjoy themselves greatly. This may simply have been because it was a day out of school, but their enthusiasm for developing their own maps would tend to suggest that they actually did like the activities they were given.

A small point we felt early on was that the classroom setting for the project was perhaps too formal. A day session on the weekend where students could choose whether or not to wear uniform, and in a less formal setting might have generated more open discussion and exchange. We decided that subsequent sessions could be on the weekend and/or held in a classroom usually used for dance instruction (i.e. with mats and

small tables rather than the formal classroom with desks and chairs).

The project also attracted quite a bit of interest from other teachers in the school. P'Noi told us that some home room teachers liked the idea of using maps to "centre" students in their home environment, and that they intended to carry out similar activities with their home room classes (focusing exclusively on students activity maps and community maps). The Chian Yai Secondary School has its fair share of community problems, including drug abuse, and home room teachers felt that these activities might provide a focus for generating a sense of pride in home and school and a greater awareness of the students' environment.

[Links with the Thai National Curriculum](#)

With an imaginative teacher like P'Noi it is easy to develop links with the curriculum. For example, she has taken the literature aspects of writing about the study animals as part of her class work, and is willing to assign grades to this work and award a prize for the best work.

There are also some standard links that work well for this project. For example, in tribute to the Crown Princess¹ school students are being asked to practice note-taking at every opportunity. Keeping a journal of the study animal provides an excellent opportunity for students to develop their note-taking skills.

¹ The Crown Princess is highly respected and loved for her diligence and good nature in carrying out public works. Wherever Her Royal Highness travels she always takes a notebook, jotting down observations and comments on what she sees. The Ministry of Education has issued a notice that all students should be encouraged to emulate this practice to develop their own skills in observation and analysis.

Another clear overlap with the Thai curriculum is through the "Thong Thin Khong Rao" syllabus or "Our locality" syllabus. This is taught in Matthayom 1 and involves diverse studies of local handicrafts, industries, geography, history etc. Although later years learn about the Thai kingdom (Our country - "Prathet Khong Rao) and then about the world (Our world - "Lok Khong Rao"), the relevance of learning about the local environment is still appreciated by most teachers and their students.

There are, of course, links with geography, biology, and, later on in the project, history.

Working with Primary Schools

Having initiated a project with a secondary school, we are also keen to begin work with primary schools. P'Noi's sister-in-law (who very kindly let us stay at her house while we were working at P'Noi's school) is a primary school teacher in the same town (Bo Lo, Nakhon Sri Thammarat). She has asked us to carry out a similar project with her students. This will require a slightly different approach focusing more on pictorial representation of places, activities and feelings from the very beginning, and with a less formal approach to map-making, but we hope soon to test these methods out in the Bo Lo Primary School.

We have also been asked by our neighbours, quite a few of whom are teachers, if we will be working in Krabi on this project. Once we have started the projects up in Nakhon Sri Thammarat and had a good chance to fine-tune what we are doing with two teachers we know very well, we will be looking for school teachers in Krabi who are also keen to participate.

Natural Value Programme

Natapon (Eddy) is gathering information on hedonic pricing, with the

intent of carrying out his master's thesis using hedonic pricing as applied to hotel room rates in Phuket and possibly other provinces nearby. The idea will be to develop an index of environmental quality and to see if this correlates with hotel room rates (using the walk in rate as a standard).

Cultural Interpretation

Garos Island Tour has expressed an interest in our help in designing signs and information hand-outs for people taking the tour. They are concerned to protect cave sites used for burial by sea gypsies in the past. More on this tour in the section on *Local Points of Interest*. They hope that by placing signs in or near these caves, and through the provision of more information on the sea gypsies, the removal of bones from these caves will cease as visitors gain more respect for the caves as part of the area's cultural heritage.

Nature Interpretation

Again, Garos Island Tour has expressed an interest in our help designing signs and information hand-outs about the natural environment for people taking the tour. In addition to wishing to promote the tour, they are keen to provide information about the rock and cave formations, traditional livelihoods in the area, birds in the area, and so forth to enhance visitors' enjoyment, and increase understanding of the natural history of the area. We have now been on this tour twice and taken a good range of photographs (Sophia's sister Eliane Wigzell will also be contributing her photographs). We will shortly begin preparing some handouts to discuss with the Garos Island Tour operators.

Small Worlds Programme

Schools Project

We have been busy contacting schools around the world interested in establishing links with schools in Thailand. Currently we have schools from the US, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and Europe interested. The idea behind the project is that all schools carry out the same class project on their community and then exchange these projects with the other participating schools. Schools in Buriram and Nakhon Sri Thammarat have expressed an interest, and we have provided these schools with all the relevant materials, but things have been rather slow to materialise. Hopefully, things will pick up as teachers gain a greater understanding of the projects, and begin to incorporate these projects into their normal teaching. A major problem in Thailand appears to be the relatively poor level of English of some of the teachers and students. In addition, we find that in general personal contact is required to develop relationships, to ensure that the projects continue. Obviously this requires a lot of our time, and we have not been able to follow up as readily as we might otherwise have wished because of other commitments (and limits of travel!).

We will keep trying though, as this project does appear to offer a useful avenue by which to introduce children in different countries to diverse cultures and experiences as they grow up.

Other Links

Durham University, UK

Three undergraduate students at Durham University are undertaking research on environmental issues in southern Thailand. These students were put in contact with NESSThai through their lecturer, Dr. Jonathon Rigg. We have made arrangements for the students

to meet some local NGOs and academics working in the areas in which they are interested, and in one case, are providing for a home-stay with a shrimp farming family. We hope also to be able to provide translation assistance for the students, either by working as translators ourselves, or by finding suitable students in local educational institutions.

Lancaster University, UK

We have been corresponding regularly with Dr. Uwem Ite, Director of Studies of the M. Res. in Environment and Development at Lancaster with respect to overseas placement of graduate students on this course. We are currently in the process of preparing additional documentation for Lancaster and pursuing formal links with local educational institutions to provide local counterparts for Lancaster graduates during their stay in Thailand (should any students select Thailand for their placement). We hope also that by establishing at least formal relationships with local educational institutions we will also be able to provide translators/ counterparts for future undergraduate students from Durham or other universities.

We should note here that all students from Durham and Lancaster will be self-funded. NESSThai is not in a position to provide financial support to these students. However, where possible we are willing to provide logistical support to other undergraduate or graduate students from other institutions.

Local Points of Interest

Garos Island Tour

The Tour

Earlier this year, during one of our exploratory drives along the side roads

in Krabi, we came across a sign to "Garos Island Pier" and decided to see what we might find there. At the end of a long, winding, bumpy dirt road, there was a small house and café area. The road stopped by a wooden pier beside an inlet in the mangroves. Across from the mangroves we could see small islands and a peninsular of that characteristic limestone karst for which Krabi has earned some fame. We arrived in late afternoon and, facing southwest, were treated to the warm afternoon rays of the sun highlighting the crags of the peaks opposite. All around were rubber plantations, and some palm.

In the café area, Eddy spoke with Khun Mudura (or "Pa") who explained that he and some partners had just started operating a tour out of this pier to some nearby caves, beaches and a narrow limestone strait (Khao Khanab Nam). At the time we were expecting a visit from a friend of ours who lives in Australia so we decided to arrange a trip. We chose a day where the tide would not be too strong and arranged to meet at around 8 a.m. We also asked Pa to provide us with lunch, which he would cook for us on the beach.

On the day the three of us (Eddy, our friend Catherine, and Sophia) set out to take the boat trip, it was slightly overcast and there was a bit of a storm brewing out to sea. Nonetheless, the sun was still quite intense through the clouds and we were grateful for the canvas roofing over the long-tail boat we were taking. The approach to the pier was quite steep and slippery, ending in a simple wooden ladder down to the boat.



Our first stop was the small fish raising platform just down the inlet and to the left of the pier. Here, Pa demonstrated how the larger fish (kept for show) would jump to take fish for feed from his hand, and offered Eddy and Catherine a turn.

Out of the water and in the mangroves, a small house on stilts provides shelter for a guard for the fish. In the area are the forms of old houses recently deserted in compliance with new government rules preventing encroachment into the mangroves. It is ironic that these fishing families have had to move out of the mangroves when their presence seems to have caused little damage, and serves to support their traditional livelihoods of fish-raising, fishing, trapping of crabs and so on. Elsewhere in the province, encroachment for shrimp farming has left far uglier scars in the forests.



We were lucky to have Pa as a guide on our tour. He explained that as a young boy (he is now in his sixties) the mangroves had been tall forests, but since he was in his early teens felling of the trees for the charcoal industry had rapidly decimated the larger trees. Now, although felling the trees in most areas has been banned it still continues, and the mangrove trees we saw were almost all no more than about three metres tall and less than 30 centimetres in diameter.

Our tour proceeded past the mangroves and out into more open water. We passed some small islets, one of which had a house just off from the cliff face and a bamboo ladder rising from a ledge up to a high cave. Although

the house was now abandoned, the ladder had been used to collect birds' nests from the cave for sale.



Throughout our trip we saw swiftlets of many sorts darting in and out of caves and crevices and soaring over the cliffs and sea, including the swiftlets that make the nests used in birds nest soup.

Our first stop was a small bay where we were taken to a cave once used by the sea gypsies for burial. Pa told us that when he first went to the cave with his father, there had been piles and piles of human bones, but these had gradually disappeared. Now there were only a few scattered bones and fragments in the cave.



Nevertheless, Pa wants to ensure that these are left where they are, and he asked our help to prepare a sign to ask people not to take these bones. Apparently, he had visited the cave with some western tourists once, and the children had collected handfuls of the bones to take as souvenirs before he had intervened through their guide and asked them not to take them away. While enthusing about his new business, Pa was concerned that the local heritage should not be adversely affected by the

tours he is running. This attitude was prevalent throughout both our visits.

Once we had climbed up to visit the cave, Pa then left us to rest on the beach while he prepared lunch. He had brought mats to sit on and a plateful of freshly steamed crabs to munch on before lunch was ready. With the sun just beginning to show through the clouds, we enjoyed a very indulgent pre-lunch snack and watched as small boats worked their way to and from fish traps and fishing sites.



Lunch was cooked on wood which Pa brought with him, in the shelter of an overhang. While catering for non-local tastes in terms of the number of chilies he used, we were served absolutely delicious freshly fried vegetables, steamed fish, and Tom Yam Kung (a hot and sour shrimp soup typical of Thai cooking). Pa brought all his cooking utensils, including the small charcoal burner, chopping board, crockery and cutlery. He was also scrupulous about clearing up afterwards, burning any wastes and then ensuring the fire wouldn't spread to surrounding vegetation.

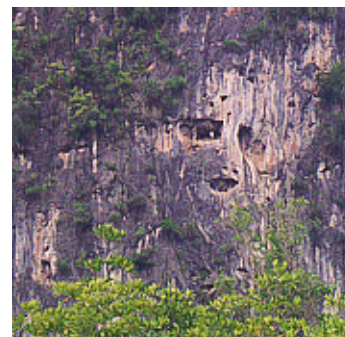


Although some might question how environmentally-sound a fire on these small bays might be, there is a long

tradition of using these bays for shelter by local fishing families and by the semi-nomadic sea gypsies who used to live in the area. All the bays we stopped in had been cultivated to some extent, with fishing families bringing trees like the tamarind and coconut palms to plant in the small areas of good soil to the back of the bays.

Because of the strength of the waves in the open sea, we were confined to the shelter provided by the peninsular. We next headed over to another little bay where we stopped for a short swim. The bay had a small wood and bamboo shelter nestled in behind a large rock where Pa and the boatman rested while we swam. This shelter had been converted into a proper house complete with large jars for storing rain water by the time we returned in July. Feeling very refreshed and with rains beginning to press in, we then headed for another inlet adjacent to the peninsular. On the way we passed a rock painting of unknown age. This is now protected as a historical artifact, but not before someone had chipped away part of the rock as a souvenir, object of study or something to sell.

In the second inlet we visited, the sound of waves was gone. We were surrounded by high limestone walls and mangroves. One cliff has a cave and surrounding area which have been shaped by the weather into a monkey's face.



We passed through this slightly eerie area to an area known as "Tham Lod"

(one of many in Krabi) where the action of waves has carved a passage under the rocks. As we came through in complete quiet (Pa used a pole to push us through rather than the motor), we entered a broad low pool of still clear water. Although it was raining, it detracted little from the place, adding the sound of the rain, and streams of water off the ferns on the cliff faces.



On our return, we once again passed through Tham Lod and then took the route towards Khao Khanab Nam. Before we got there, however, we visited another small cave which Pa had recently found and wanted to explore. There was a rope to help with climbing up the two or so metres into the cave, but even so it was quite a struggle to get in. The view from the cave out over the mangroves was impressive, and there seemed to be quite a bit to explore away from the entrance. The second time we visited, Pa had brought a flashlight, and he and his partners had already built a bamboo ladder to help get into the cave. Inside there were literally hundreds of bats. The cave was spectacular in its own right containing some intricately twisted columns of several different colours.

On both visits, we had to make a bit of a dash for the Khao Khanab Nam strait and then home. Having taken both trips during the monsoon season, we were chased home by driving rain. Still, Pa and his partners are very experienced boatmen and cautious in where they are willing to travel. They stop regularly to greet local fisherfolk on their boats and to enquire about the catch and the

weather, and they know these waters well. With life vests on the boat, relatively shallow waters throughout in any case, and the care of our hosts, we never had any real reason to feel concerned about our safety.

The Founders of Garos Island Tour

On our second visit with Pa, his partner Moss also accompanied us. We chatted with Moss about his experiences in the tourism industry in Ao Nang, where he learned English, and their reasons for starting up this tour. Khun Moss explained that he wanted to leave Ao Nang and return home because money appeared to have become the driving force behind all tourism operations: "Everyone seems to see visitors as walking ATMs.", "things have changed from ten years ago where we used to help people out so they could enjoy our province". He also wanted to provide work for local people through the tourism industry, while using tourism as a force for conservation. He has a small group of friends in his village with similar interests and concerns, and they are thinking about starting up a club to conserve the environment in the area. They have visited some of the local bays to clear up garbage dumped by tourists (according to Khun Moss, these were Thai tourists), and plan to clean up waste plastics deposited on the beaches by the sea at regular intervals. Khun Moss has had the opportunity to travel widely around the world, and is very appreciative of the need to conserve the environment in his own backyard. Pa appreciates that garbage is unsightly and unhealthy and wants to conserve what has become the basis of his new livelihood - the spectacular scenery of the Garos Island area and surrounds.

The company hires local boatmen for a good daily rate (at least 500 Baht per day for a small boat, and more for a

larger boat). They also buy all fish and other food locally. Pa wants to build a small kitchen on one of the beaches so that he doesn't need to carry all his cooking utensils with him, and he plans on hiring an assistant to help with cooking and guiding. They don't plan on growing very large - taking tours of more than 10 people a day is "no fun". However, they are interested in building a small bungalow operation near the pier. The location, which is well off the beaten-track for the beach set, would be ideal for a small "ecotourism" type operation.

They want to provide visitors with insights they might not otherwise get into the area. While Moss's English is good for guiding, there is still a language barrier if he isn't available, and many of Pa's insights as a local are not heard. Pa is humble where his own knowledge is concerned, and recommended that we consult with one of the village elders for more history of the area to assist in preparing information handouts for their tour.

Pa has received a promise of support from the Tambon Council to provide a proper path and steps to the boats. His tour company has received recognition from the Tourism Authority of Thailand and local dignitaries. Nonetheless, on our return in July, some three months later, no progress had been made on the steps to the pier. Still, one couldn't wish for more helpful and considerate guides, all of whom made sure we all made it comfortably down the ladder and into the boat (Sophia was the focus of particular concern being now nearly six months pregnant!).

The tour is a good example of a locally-owned and managed company with a strong conservation philosophy at its outset. Certain activities need controlling (e.g. access to the cave with the bats should be limited and monitored), but the general attitude of

the owners is one of respect and appreciation for their surroundings and heritage, and care and consideration for the well-being of their guests. We were also strongly impressed by the very obvious respect for the cultural differences between host and guest which Pa and Khun Moss and the boatmen had for our two parties of visitors.

If Pa and Khun Moss are to keep their activities low impact it is unlikely that this will ever be the main income earner of the majority of the local community. To date it seems that Garos Island Tour is well-integrated with the local communities who are very accepting of the visitors they receive via the tour. Larger numbers and overnight visitors staying at a bungalow might have a greater impact, but could also provide greater scope for community involvement. Adverse impacts could be kept to a minimum through ensuring visitors are aware of cultural mores and respect the local community's wishes concerning the bungalows.

NESSThai hopes to work with Garos Island Tour to assist with nature and cultural interpretation.

Protecting James Bond Island

The Bangkok Post of July 28th carried a story on forthcoming measures to protect "James Bond Island" or "Khao Tapoo", the limestone outcrop which featured in the 007 movie "Man with a Golden Gun".

The Forestry Department has found that the base has been eroded by 50 cm mainly from tour boat wash, and there are concerns that the outcrop could collapse if not protected. According to the department chief, Plodprasop Suraswadi, owners of the 55 businesses on the island had agreed to shift to two rafts which would also serve tour boats. The relocation would be complete within six months.

Next Issue

We will bring you up to date with the results of the visits from the undergraduate students from Durham University, and hope to have followed up work with our Habitats project.

If you have any comments or anything to which you would like to draw our attention, please feel free to contact us.

In the meantime, we wish you a happy August and September of 1999!



Next Issue due in October
1999

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